A plain and faithful Teſtimony againſt that abominable, but too faſhionable Vice of profane Swearing.

BEING

The Subſtance of ſeveral

DISCOURSES

From JAMES V. 12.

Which came lately in Courſe to be expounded.

By *NATHANIEL APPLETON*, A.M.
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Proper to be in Families for the frequent ſerious Peruſal of young People.

I am a great King ſaith the Lord of Hoſts my Name is DREADFUL. MALACHI.

SANCTIFY the Lord of Hoſts himſelf, and let him be your FEAR, and your DREAD. ISAIAH.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

A faithful Teſtimony againſt profane Swearing.

JAMES V. 12.

But above all things, my brethren, ſwear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: But let your yea, be yea, and your nay, nay; leſt ye fall into condemnation.

THIS epiſtle being directed to the Chriſtianized Jews in all their diſperſions; the apoſtle exhorted them to many duties; and reproved and warned them as to many ſins, which he underſtood were too much indulged by them. At length he comes to admoniſh and warn them very earneſtly againſt all ſinful ſwearing, and that in any degree whatever; and this he does in conformity to his maſter whom he heard preaching to the ſame purpoſe, and very near in the ſame words, but only larger, in his excellent ſermon upon the mount. "Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid by them of old time, thou ſhalt not forſwear thyſelf,

but

but ſhalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I ſay unto you, ſwear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth, for it is his footſtool: Neither by Jeruſalem, for it is the city of the great king: Neither ſhalt thou ſwear by thy head, becauſe thou canſt not make one hair white or black: But let your converſation be yea, yea, nay, nay: For whatſoever is more than theſe, cometh of evil."* The plain drift of Chriſt, and ſo of the apoſtle here, is to cry down all ſinful ſwearing, which horrible vice the apoſtle underſtood very much prevailed among the Jews, and the heathen, and conſequently that the Chriſtians were in great danger of being corrupted by ſuch evil communication; and therefore does he give the ſolemn cautions and warnings of our text to them. And here we ſee the apoſtle had an apprehenſion of profane ſwearing as one of the moſt vile and abominable ſins, and what they ought above every thing to beware of. *But above all things, my brethren, ſwear not.* Whatever you do or ſay, beſure take heed of *ſwearing*: Let the provocation or temptation be what it will, yet don't *ſwear*. The apoſtle in the foregoing verſes exhorts the brethren to patience under all their ſufferings, and recommends the example of the prophets who had patiently ſuffered for the cauſe of God; and particularly puts them in mind of the patience of Job, that they might learn of him to be patient under the heavieſt trials. And becauſe a time of perſecution and great provocation was apt to draw forth mens paſſions and corruptions in profane curſing and ſwearing; therefore the apoſtle ſo earneſtly cautions them againſt giving way to their angry

* Matt. v. 33—37.

angry reſentments at ſuch a time, as to break forth in any indecent and profane expreſſions which was ſo common among them; and it was as much as for the apoſtle to ſay, whatever provocations you meet with from the inſults and abuſes of men, take heed that your paſſions don't riſe ſo high as to break forth in curſing and ſwearing; but that ye, like Job and the holy prophets of old, under ſuffering in patience poſſeſs your ſouls. And here he would have them know that they may not content themſelves with refraining from ſwearing by the name of GOD; but that they may not ſwear by any creature whatever, neither by *heaven*, neither by the *earth*, neither by *any other oath*, that was faſhionable and common among them at that day. But that they ſhould content themſelves with a plain ſimple affirming and denying by *yea*, and *nay;* and endeavour always to ſpeak ſo agreeable to truth, that there may be no occaſion for any thing but the bare affirming or denying a thing to give credit or diſcredit to the ſame: And this the apoſtle cautions and counſels them about, leſt *they fall into condemnation;* that is, leſt they fall under the condemnation of almighty God, who will not hold ſuch guiltleſs who take his name in vain.

AND now conſidering what an heinous ſin this of falſe, raſh and profane ſwearing is; and, notwithſtanding all that Chriſt and his apoſtles have declared againſt it, that it is become a common and even faſhionable vice among many of the younger people in this place, and that even the whole land is defiled herewith. I ſay conſidering theſe things, inſtead of paſſing over this verſe in ſuch a curſory expoſitory way as I do

many

many others; I propoſe here to make a *ſtand*, a *ſolemn pauſe*, and to give the words a diſtinct and particular conſideration; and ſhall endeavour by the help of God to act the part of a faithful watchman, and give you ſeaſonable and faithful warning againſt this crying, curſed, but prevailing ſin; that ſuch who have not as yet polluted their lips, nor defiled their ſouls with profane ſwearing, may be preſerved from the infection; and that ſuch as have unhappily fallen into it may ſee the evil, the folly, and the danger of it, and break off ſuch a vile practice before it becomes ſo cuſtomary and habitual, as to fall into it before they are aware of it, or without being ſo much as ſenſible of it; which ſome have ſhamefully pleaded in excuſe for themſelves.——Accordingly, what I propoſe from the words before us is,—

I. To ſhow what we are to underſtand by the prohibition of the text, *Swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath;* and how extenſive this prohibition is.

II. To give the reaſons why we ſhould be ſo very careful to refrain from all kind of ſwearing that is here forbidden.

III. To ſet forth what is to be underſtood by the precept of having our *Yea, Yea*, and our *Nay, Nay*.

IV. And then I propoſe a large, particular and cloſe Application.

And

And whilſt I am diſcourſing upon this ſubject, let me beſeech, and as a miniſter of Chriſt demand, the ſerious, reverend and cloſe attention of this chriſtian audience, and eſpecially of the younger people: For according as you receive and reliſh the word of God upon this awful and important ſubject, it will *prove a ſavor of life unto life; or a ſavor of death unto death unto you.*

I. Let us conſider what is to be underſtood by, or is comprehended in, the prohibition of our text, *Swear not*, &c.

Upon which I would ſay, to prevent miſtake,

Firſt of all,

That this is not to be underſtood as if all ſwearing was hereby abſolutely forbidden. Indeed it muſt be acknowledged that the words are full and ſtrong, *ſwear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath.* And ſo are the fore-quoted words of our ſaviour, Matt. v. 34, 35, "I ſay unto you ſwear not at all, neither by heaven, &c. but let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay: For whatſoever is more than theſe cometh of evil." That is, more than *yea* and *nay.* And it is allowed by ſome of the learned in antiquity,* that ſome of the primitive chriſtians for the two or three firſt centuries, ſo underſtood Chriſt and this apoſtle, as to hold all oaths to be unlawful, and would not allow of ſwearing upon any occaſion: But others who have ſearched the ſcriptures, and compared one place with another, find it is not conſiſtent with other places of ſcripture, nor with the nature and neceſſity of things, to conſtrue this prohibition ſo univerſal and unlimited as ſome have done: But make it abundantly

* Dr. Cave's primitive Chriſtianity.

abundantly evident that in ſome caſes oaths are lawful, expedient; yea even neceſſary. Thus it is obſerved that under the Jewiſh law when they had this very command delivered to them from Mount Sinai, and written upon tables of ſtone, *Thou ſhalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain*, ‡ ſome oaths were not only allowed, but in ſome caſes expreſly required. Thus the people were required to enter into a covenant, *and into an oath* with the Lord their God. † So in any matter of diſpute between men relating to any creature committed to truſt, that ſhould be miſſing; it is ſaid *there ſhall be an oath of the Lord between them both* to decide the controverſy. § And many inſtances there are of holy and good men taking oaths under the old teſtament diſpenſation. And even in goſpel days when the prohibition was expreſly given, *above all things, my brethren, ſwear not by any oath*; we meet with ſuch things as make it abundantly evident that upon ſome occaſions oaths may be made uſe of. Thus we ſhall find ſeveral inſtances of the apoſtle Paul's uſing words in his writings which have the form and force of an oath in them. Thus * *God is my witneſs*, and what is an oath but a ſolemn calling God to witneſs. *Behold before God I lie not. I call God to record upon my ſoul, God is my record*, &c. Now we cannot ſuppoſe the holy apoſtle would have uſed theſe and ſuch like expreſſions, although upon the moſt ſolemn occaſion, if he had underſtood our Saviour that all oaths, all ſolemn calling God to witneſs to any thing was abſolutely unlawful.—— Moreover it may be obſerved that Jeſus Chriſt himſelf

‡ Exod. xx. 7. † Deut. xxix. 12. § Exod. xxii. 11.
* Rom. i. 3. Gal. i. 2. 2 Cor. i. 23. Phil. i. 8.

ſelf who gave this prohibition againſt ſwearing, yet is repreſented in the viſion of John under the ſimilitude of a mighty angel, as lifting up his hand to heaven, and *ſwearing by him that liveth forever and ever.** Nay the great God himſelf is repreſented as putting himſelf under an oath, and becauſe he could ſwear by no greater he ſware by himſelf, and to ſhew the immutability of his counſel he *confirmed it by an oath.* †

MOREOVER if we conſider what the apoſtle ſays concerning the uſe of oaths, we may conclude that they are lawful, yea even neceſſary in ſome caſes, ſays he *For men verily ſwear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all ſtrife.* ‡ So that the deſign of an oath is to bring things of diſpute and uncertainty, and doubt, to a more full and ſatisfactory evidence; and to decide and finiſh controverſies between man and man: And this is ſuch a uſeful and valuable end that when the matter of controverſy cannot be iſſued any other way, an oath may juſtly be called for, and demanded.

INDEED this uſe of an oath goes upon the ſuppoſition, that a man's ſimple *yea* and *nay* is not to be depended upon in all caſes, and that there needs ſomething more ſolemn and ſacred to bind men to ſpeak the truth; and that a man who will in ſome caſes venture to tell a ſimple plain lie, dare not ſolemnly call the omniſcient and the infinitely holy God to witneſs to it, and imprecate his vengeance if what he ſays be not true, when he himſelf knows it to be falſe. And this is doubtleſs the caſe of many, that they will talk deceitfully, and utter known falſehoods; yet dare not go ſuch a further length in

* Rev. x. 56. † Heb. vi. 13, 17. ‡ Heb. vi. 16.

daring wickedneſs as ſolemnly to give oath to the ſame. So that the uſefulneſs, yea even neceſſity of oaths goes upon the ſuppoſition of the deceit and falſeneſs there is among mankind: For if men were perfectly true and upright, and not the leaſt guile found in their mouth, their *yea*, and their *nay*, would be ſufficient. And if we could ſuppoſe men to be in a ſtate of perfection, it ſhould ſeem there would be no occaſion for oaths, a man's *yea* and *nay* would anſwer the end. But inaſmuch as all men are corrupt and have an heart deceitful, and a tongue that frameth deceit, and ſome love lying rather than to ſpeak the truth in matters wherein their intereſt is concerned; I ſay conſidering this, there doubtleſs needs in momentous and important caſes, by all reaſonable methods to compel men to ſpeak the truth. And altho' ſome may have gotten to ſuch a deſperate degree of wickedneſs, that even the moſt ſolemn oaths will not bind them; yet this is the moſt likely method, and indeed the higheſt ſtep we may take for extorting truth from men. And therefore for the ſake of coming at the truth and of ſettling controverſies between man and man; and for the more firmly binding perſons to the faithful diſcharge of the ſeveral truſts repoſed in them, it is doubtleſs lawful and expedient in many caſes to have oaths adminiſtred to one and another during our preſent imperfect and corrupt ſtate.

Let us now proceed to ſpeak poſitively, and ſhow what oaths or what ſwearing is here forbidden.

Now the inhibition is very general altho' not univerſal. Swear not, neither by heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath. Here let me ſay,

1ſt. *That*

1ſt. *That before all perjury or falſe ſwearing is here moſt ſtrictly forbidden, as one of the moſt vile and abominable ſins.*

THIS is what the light of nature as well as divine revelation teaches us to abhor. For what can be a more daring affront to the infinitely great and holy God, than in a ſolemn manner to call him to witneſs to that which we know to be falſe, or indeed which we don't know to be true? And what can be more dangerous or dreadful than to pawn all our intereſt in the bleſſed God, and imprecate his almighty vengeance and all his judgments upon us, if the thing we aſſert be not true; and yet we ourſelves know it to be falſe, or don't know it to be true? Oh! what might ſuch daring preſumptuous ſinners who will perjure or forſwear themſelves expect; but that God according to their impious imprecations, ſhould immediately come forth againſt them, and by ſome awful judgment convince them and others of their daring wickedneſs: What can ſuch expect who lift up their hand in God's name to a known falſehood, or to what they know not to be true; but that God ſhould cauſe their hand to periſh, and their arm to fall from their ſhoulder blade in a moment? And if there be any ſuch preſumptuous ſinners before the Lord, let them humble themſelves to the very duſt, and cry mightily to God for mercy thro' Jeſus Chriſt, leſt ſome remarkable judgment ſhould befall you here; or leſt you ſhould be the monuments of his wrath forever hereafter; for depend upon it, that God will not hold ſuch perjured wretches guiltleſs. And altho' we may not pronounce it the blaſphemy againſt the

Holy Ghoſt, that is unpardonable; yet we may ſay that deliberate perjury is one of the greateſt ſins that God ever forgives. Deliberate perjury ſhews a man to be got to ſuch a pitch of wickedneſs, as to be upon the very point of being given up to his hearts luſts, and ſo to be left to periſh in his iniquity. And now as there are two ſorts of oaths, viz. *aſſertory* and *promiſſory*; ſo there are two ſorts of perjured perſons, viz. thoſe who ſolemnly ſwear to a known falſhood, or to what they know not to be true—and ſuch who ſwear to the faithful performance of ſome truſt, and diſcharging the duties of ſome office, and this without any deſign or deſire or endeavour to perform the ſame; and notwithſtanding the ſacred and ſolemn oath of God upon them, willfully and careleſly neglect the truſt repoſed in them. So that not only the perſon who preſumptuouſly ſwears to a falſhood; but he who being ſworn into any office, and takes no manner of care to diſcharge the ſame, is a perjured perſon, whom *God will not hold guiltleſs*.

2d. *All vain unneceſſary oaths* are here forbidden.

For altho' ſome oaths in ſome caſes are allowable, and even neceſſary in the preſent ſtate of things; yet there ought to be no more than needs muſt. It is only the degeneracy and corruption of man that renders any oaths neceſſary or allowable: For if men were perfectly juſt and faithful, and true, their ſimple yea, and nay would be ſufficient. And therefore when any thing ſhort of an oath will anſwer the end, oaths ought not to be taken or impoſed upon us. For what is it but a taking God's name in vain, ſolemnly to call him to witneſs to the truth

of

of a thing which may be made manifeſt without it, or which is ſo inſignificant and trifling in itſelf, that it matters not whether it be proved or not?

So that the needleſs multiplying oaths is undoubtedly contrary to the rule of Chriſt and of his apoſtle. When Chriſt ſays, *Swear not at all*, and his apoſtle, *Swear not by any oath;* it at leaſt intends that we ſhould make uſe of oaths only in caſes of neceſſity, and where nothing ſhort can anſwer the end. And altho' it muſt be acknowledged as a ſorrowful caſe that the corruptions of men have made ſo many oaths neceſſary; yet on the other hand it muſt be ſaid that the needleſs multiplying them has a very bad tendency, as thereby the reverence and ſolemnity of oaths is very much loſt; and people are led hereby to be more careleſs and ſlack about their ſimple affirmations and promiſes: For when perſons upon every little occaſion are called upon to ſwear, the language of it is, that there is but little regard to be had to their bare words, and this will naturally lead people to be leſs careful about them themſelves.

3d. *All raſh oaths* come within the prohibition of our text.

Swear not, ſee that you don't ſwear raſhly and without due conſideration in any caſe whatever. "Be not raſh with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be haſty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few."* And, as I obſerved before, oaths are either *aſſertory* or *promiſſory*: And in both theſe caſes men are exceeding apt to be raſh. That is, perſons are exceeding apt to declare and aſſert things upon oath

* Eccleſ. v. 2.

oath before they have duly conſidered whether all they ſay be true, and whether they have the certain knowledge of the truth thereof, ſo as to ſwear to it upon their own knowledge. A perſon may ſwear to That, and only to That which is true, and yet it may be a raſh oath in him, by not having ſufficient knowledge thereof in himſelf. So when a man takes a promiſſory oath for the performing any certain ſervices, without duly conſidering whether he is capable of performing the ſame; or whether he deſigns and reſolves by God's grace to perform his oath; this would be raſh ſwearing.

And now all ſuch raſhneſs in ſwearing muſt needs be very ſinful: For what is an oath but a ſolemn religious appeal to the great omniſcient God for the truth of what we declare, and of what we promiſe and engage to perform? We do as it were relinquiſh and give up all intereſt in the ſpecial favour of God if we be not true and ſincere in what we declare and promiſe. And now what a criminal freedom do ſuch uſe with the infinite Majeſty of heaven; and what want of reverence to his holy name do ſuch ſhow, who will ſuddenly, and before they have duly conſidered the matter, venture to take an oath, appealing ſolemnly to God's omniſcience, and imprecating divine judgments upon them, if they are not ſincere in what they declare? Surely ſuch as will ſuddenly and raſhly take an oath, without thoroughly conſidering what they are going to ſwear, and without a proper ſerioufneſs and ſolemnity of ſpirit, are not of them who *fear an oath;* nor have they that fear of God before their eyes, nor that reverence of the divine Majeſty in their hearts which the

goſpel

goſpel requires. And, oh! the multitude of raſh oaths that are taken every day; and oh! the guilt which ſuch perſons bring upon themſelves before they are aware of it!

4th. *All profane ſwearing in common converſation, even all irreverent and profane calling upon the name of God is here moſt ſtrictly forbidden.*

And indeed this ſeems to be the very kind of ſwearing which the apoſtle does ſo ſolemnly and earneſtly warn them againſt in my text; and which I ſhall accordingly have a ſpecial reference to, in the following part of my diſcourſe upon this ſubject.

Thus when perſons do in a careleſs irreverent manner, and with all the airs of levity and vanity appeal to God, and uſe his ſacred name for the truth of any thing how trifling ſoever in their common converſation, *that is profane ſwearing.* Thus when perſons for the confirmation of what they are talking about, will ſay, *By God it is ſo:* or *I ſwear by God it is ſo:* or *by the living God:* or *as ſure as there is a God in heaven* it is ſo and ſo, or words to the like purpoſe. Or when they promiſe any thing how trifling ſoever, will bind it with a profane oath, ſaying *by God* I will do this or that, or when perſons will expreſs their tokens of admiration at any trifle with invoking the name of God, ſaying *Oh! God!* or *Oh! Lord! Lord bleſs me,* &c. or when perſons in paſſion or anger will vent it with *God damn ye,* or *God damn me* if I don't do ſo and ſo to you; *God damn your blood, God damn your ſoul,* &c. Words that my very fleſh trembles to utter: Or when perſons under the notion of complaiſance or good humour will greet one another at their firſt meeting,

meeting, with a *God bleſs you*, or *God damn you*; juſt as it happens.

Such profane expreſſions as theſe which the wicked heart of man by the help of the wicked one has invented to be uſed in common converſation, upon any provocation or trifling occaſion, is what we are to underſtand by profane ſwearing and curſing; and is as it is generally agreed what the apoſtle means when he ſays *above all things, my brethren, ſwear not*, above all things take heed that you don't uſe the ſacred name of God in ſuch a light, vain and irreverent way, in profane oaths, execrations, or exclamations.

And how obvious ſoever the unreaſonableneſs, and the deteſtable wickedneſs of this ſin is; yet it prevailed among the impious heathen and Jews at that day; and even ſome who had the name of Chriſtians were infected with it; at leaſt the apoſtle was jealous that they would be, therefore does he ſo earneſtly caution them againſt it, that they ſhould above all beware of being carried away by the flood of corrupt examples into the common ſtream of horrible profaneſs: Intimating hereby that this was among the vileſt and groſſeſt ſins.

5th. *The ſwearing by any creature, or with any ſort of oath, in common converſation*, is here forbidden.

For thus it is expreſſed, *neither by the heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath.*—— The Jews, who did not allow of any ſwearing by the name of God, but in a reverent and religious manner, and to things that were not only true, but of ſome importance; yet practically allowed of ſwearing by other things, and made ſo light of oaths,

oaths, or ſwearing by any creature, that they hardly looked upon ſuch oaths as binding; and made it a matter of meer indifferency, ſo far as to utter ſuch oaths freely in their common converſation; ſwearing by the heaven, or by the earth, or by the city Jeruſalem, or by the temple, or by the altar, and the like kind of oaths. But now our Saviour, and the apoſtle after him, expreſly forbids all ſuch oaths as theſe, as profane and impious, and as what comes of evil, and expoſe to condemnation. And our Saviour is moſt full and expreſs in the matter in the forementioned Mat. v. 35. But I ſay unto you ſwear not at all, *neither by heaven, for it is God's throne*; and ſo as one paraphraſes it, "It is in effect ſwearing by the great God himſelf who ſits upon the throne: Neither by the earth, *for it is his footſtool*; and conſequently he who ſweareth by it, ſwears by him whoſe footſtool it is: Neither by Jeruſalem, for it the the *city of the great King*; and ſo he who ſweareth by it, ſweareth by him who dwelleth therein. Neither ſhalt thou ſwear *by thine head*; becauſe thou canſt not make one hair black or white; but it is effected by the power and providence of God, and conſequently is ſwearing by him." By all which it abundantly appears that all thoſe petty oaths which the corrupt wit of man has invented, are forbidden: And that altho' the name of God be not expreſly mentioned, yet every thing that men ſwear by, has ultimately a reference to him. If you ſwear by the heavens, you ſwear by the God of heaven: If you ſwear by the earth, you ſwear by the Lord of the whole earth: If you ſwear by your life, you

ſwear by the God of your life: And ſo if you ſwear by any other oath, it has ſo far a reference to the great God that his name is profaned and he offended hereby, even altho' his name be not mentioned.

MOREOVER, all ſuch ſwearing by the creature may be conſidered as a ſort of idolatry: For an oath is an act of religious worſhip; and therefore when you ſwear by any creature, you do as it were pay religious worſhip to that creature. An oath is an appeal to infinite knowledge, truth, and power, and an invocation of the ſame to detect and puniſh us, if what we declare and promiſe be not according to truth. And therefore the ſwearing by any creature is in a ſort attributing theſe perfections to the creature, which belong only to the great God himſelf: So that ſwearing by any creature; ſwearing by heaven, by the earth, by your life, by your ſoul, is contrary to the law of God, is profaning or abuſing that whereby God makes himſelf known, and is utterly diſallowed by Chriſt in his goſpel; and, whatever ſuch perſons imagine, they incur a great deal of guilt, and will be found among thoſe profane perſons who ſhall not eſcape the righteous judgment of God, except they repent.

6th. FINALLY here let me add, that when perſons in common converſation will ſay *I ſwear;* as when they to confirm any thing they are relating will ſay *I ſwear* it is true: Or, when they promiſe any thing, ſay *I ſwear* I will do it; even altho' they do not mention any thing by which they ſwear, this may be reckoned a profane oath, and is comprehended in the prohibition of our text.

FOR

For here is the form of an oath uſed; and when a perſon ſays *I ſwear*, it implies his ſwearing by ſomething or other, either by God, or by ſome creature, which as Chriſt teaches is much the ſame thing as ſwearing by God himſelf. And it don't ſignify for perſons to plead in excuſe for themſelves, that when they ſay *I ſwear*, they don't mean to ſwear by God, or by any creature: For here is the form of an oath uſed, which is an appeal ultimately to God. And if the perſon has no particular thought of this at the time he uſes thoſe words; yet that very want of thought ſhows it to be a vain oath: For it is treating an oath, which is a ſacred and ſolemn thing in a light, vain, and thoughtleſs manner.——In ſhort, when a man in common converſation ſays *I ſwear*, he either ſwears, or he does not. If he ſwears, it is ſurely a vain and profane oath: If he does not ſwear, he utters a falſehood. So take it either way, he involves himſelf in ſin and guilt.

What has been ſaid may ſuffice to ſet forth the ſeveral ſpecies of profane ſwearing, which we are ſo loudly and earneſtly called upon by the goſpel to forbear, and entirely to refrain from as utterly unbecoming the chriſtian character.

The next thing propoſed is to ſet forth the evil of profane ſwearing, and the reaſons why we ſhould above all things refrain from this horrible vice. But before I enter upon it, I would make a pauſe; and call upon every one ſeriouſly to reflect upon himſelf, and ſee whether, wherein, and how far, he has tranſgreſſed this rule of the goſpel.

You who have been called to give your public

and ſolemn teſtimony in any caſe depending, I would have ſeriouſly, cloſely, and impartially to conſider whether you had at that time a proper ſenſe of the ſacredneſs of an oath, and whether you had ſuch a ſtrict regard to truth as ſuch a ſolemn appeal to the omniſcience, truth, and power of the great and holy God demanded of you: Whether you duly weighed the matter about which you were to teſtify, and whether you was careful to declare the truth, the whole truth, without keeping back any part of it, and whether you declared nothing but the truth; and what you knew to be ſo; without adding any circumſtances beſide the truth, that might give a wrong repreſentation of the ſame. And now, oh! my hearers, if any of you have been guilty in any of theſe reſpects, ſo far you have incurred the guilt of perjury; and you have infinite reaſon to humble yourſelves to the very duſt before God; and by a penitent faith to repair to the merits of Chriſt's blood for pardoning mercy: And if you have ever injured any perſon by your falſe or partial oaths, you ought to take all due care for the reparation of the ſame.

But then let every one examine himſelf as to *profane ſwearing and curſing*. Are there not ſome of you whoſe conſciences now accuſe you of taking God's name in vain, by uſing that ſacred, glorious, and fearful name in a vain, careleſs, and profane manner? Examine yourſelves, and let conſcience upon reflection ſay, whether you have not uſed yourſelves, by way of exclamation to cry out *O Lord!* or *O God!* &c. And whether you have not uſed yourſelves, by way of aſſeveration, to ſay *By God* it is thus and thus: *I ſwear by God* I will do this or that?

that? And have not your ſalutations of one another been ſet off with a *God bleſs you*, or *God damn you*, and the like? Oh! that every guilty perſon might be awakened, might be convinced and humbled; and may the bleſſed ſpirit of God come into every heart and ſoul, to convince of this abominable ſin; the heinous nature of which I proceed now to ſet before you.

II. LET us *conſider the horrid evil of profane ſwearing; and ſo the reaſon why we ſhould be above all things careful that we don't live in the practice of it.*

And here let it be ſaid,

1ſt. THAT this profane ſwearing and curſing *is what God has abſolutely forbidden*; and ſurely that is reaſon enough of itſelf for us to refrain from ſuch a practice.

THUS we have it forbidden in the moſt expreſs terms, and in the moſt awful and glorious manner by God himſelf from mount Sinai. *God ſpake all theſe words, ſaying*, among which are theſe,* *Thou ſhalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain*, which is repeated and further explained in Lev. xix. 12. *Ye ſhall not ſwear by my name falſly, neither ſhalt thou profane the name of thy God, I am the Lord.* And our Saviour forbids it in the plaineſt and ſtrongeſt terms, in the fore-mentioned ſermon of his upon the mount.† I ſay unto you ſwear not at all; neither by heaven nor by the earth, neither by Jeruſalem, neither by thine head; and the apoſtle compleats the prohibition in our text, *neither by any other oath.* So that every kind of oath, whether falſe or profane, is here abſolutely forbidden.

AND ſurely this very conſideration renders it infinitely reaſonable for us carefully to avoid all ſuch

* Exod. xx. 7. † Matth. v. 34. 35.

ſuch ſwearing. Has not the Majeſty of heaven infinite right to give laws to his own creatures? and conſequently, are they not under infinite obligations religiouſly to obſerve the ſame? Shall the Sovereign of the univerſe abſolutely forbid all profane curſing or ſwearing by his ſacred name, and ſhall we preſume to do it? When the great God himſelf ſays ye ſhall not take his name in vain, what contempt is it of his authority, what an inſult upon Divine Majeſty, and how do we affront him, even to his very face, when we ſuffer ourſelves to uſe his name in a careleſs and profane manner? Has not he a juſt right to ſay how and in what manner his name may be taken and treated by us? and what diſobedience and contempt of his power, to make uſe of his name in any other way than he permits us?

2dly, *If we conſider God's name as holy and reverend*, we ſhall ſee more of the ſin and wickedneſs of profaning it.

Holy and reverend is his name, is the language of ſcripture. * Surely then it ought never to be treated in an unholy and irreverent manner. God is glorious in holineſs, and fearful in praiſes; therefore to ſpeak of him, and to uſe his name in a vain, looſe and careleſs manner, is altogether unworthy, and muſt needs be very provoking to him. There is none holy as the Lord; the heavens themſelves are not clean in his ſight; and holineſs becomes his preſence forever, and all our behaviour towards God, ſo much as the mentioning his name, ſhould be done with holy reverence. Such is the infinite greatneſs and holineſs of God, that it is infinite grace and condeſcention in him to permit us ſo much

* Pſal. cxi. 9.

much as to take his great and dreadful name into our polluted lips: How profane and wicked then muſt it needs be, to toſs about that ſacred name in our ſports and plays, in our paſſions and quarrels, or in our familiar converſation, as an expletive or ſuppoſed ornament of ſpeech! The name of the *Lord thy God* is called a *glorious and fearful name*.* How daring and preſumptuous muſt it be, to uſe this name with the ſame free and careleſs air, we would uſe the name of any of our fellow creatures! It is a name at which every knee in heaven bows in token of the moſt profound reverence: How abominable then muſt it needs be for any of the children of men upon earth to uſe it in a light and vain manner! In ſhort he is called *the great and dreadful God*.† And ſays God of himſelf, I am a great King and my name is dreadful.‡ Surely then his dread ſhould ſo fall upon us, and his excellency make us ſo afraid, as that whenever we mention that great and dreadful name, it ſhould be with an holy awe and reverence. How contrary then to this is it, for men to uſe this dreadful name in all their common talk, without any ſeriouſneſs or ſolemnity of ſpirit at the mentioning the ſame; but it proceeds out of their mouth either in ſport and jeſt, or rage and paſſion; or in polite complaiſance, to let their profane companions ſee they are no more afraid of profaning the name of God than they themſelves are. Surely if perſons did but in any meaſure ſee the glory and the majeſty of the Lord, they would ſee that he is greatly to be feared and to be had in reverence; and that to uſe his name in a profane manner, is openly to inſult Majeſty, even the Majeſty of Heaven itſelf. Profane ſinners

* Deut. xxviii. 58. † Dan. ix. 4. ‡ Mal. i. 14.

ſinners muſt needs have very low, if any thoughts at all of the Divine Being, and as if he was altogether ſuch an one as themſelves, or they could not uſe his ſacred name ſo lightly and vainly as they do. Is it poſſible to ſuppoſe a man has a proper ſenſe of the greatneſs and holineſs of God upon his heart, when he makes ſo free with his ſacred name with his lips? —— Or And ſo this leads me to ſay,

3dly, THE unreaſonableneſs and wickedneſs of profane ſwearing may be argued from this, *that it always proceeds from ſome evil or other.*

THIS is the account our Saviour, who knew what was in man, gives of the matter; after he had ſo ſtrictly charged his diſciples to refrain from profane oaths of every kind, and recommended to them that plain and ſimple converſation of *yea yea*, and *nay nay*; he ſays, whatſoever is more than theſe *cometh of evil*, that is, any thing beyond a ſimple plain affirmation or negation; eſpecially when we go ſo far as to uſe any ſort of oath in our common converſation, it all cometh of evil: That is, either from a corrupt and evil principle in the heart, or from the evil one.

1. ALL profane curſing and ſwearing muſt needs proceed from ſome evil principle within.

LET any man who is addicted to profane ſwearing and curſing, examine his own heart, to ſee from whence it proceeds, and he will find that it comes from ſome corrupt and wicked principle within: Sometimes from one evil principle, ſometimes from another, and never from any thing but what is corrupt and wicked.

THUS

THUS, *ſometimes it proceeds from the atheiſm and unbelief of mens hearts.*

THERE are fools who ſay in their hearts there is no God.* And one would be ready to think that was the vain imagination of all profane ſwearers: For it is hard to think how any perſons who have a realizing belief of the infinite being and perfections of God, would dare to make ſo bold with his ſacred name. How is it poſſible for a man to realize that there is a God in heaven, an infinitely great, holy and jealous God; and ſo freely profane his holy name, as to toſs it about in common converſation, and amongſt all their fooliſh talking and jeſting? But if men have ſo much atheiſm in their hearts as not to think there is a God, no wonder they uſe that ſacred name ſo vainly as they do, and as they would any other empty name or ſound, only as an expletive to fill up the empty ſpaces in converſation; or the better to ſet off and adorn their ſpeech, as they fooliſhly think. But what an evil heart of unbelief muſt that be, which amidſt ſuch inconteſtable evidence and demonſtration of an eternal power and Godhead, ſhould ſo call it into queſtion as to uſe the name as a meer empty ſound?

BUT then if ſuch do believe the Divine Being, their profaning his name muſt proceed *from a ſinful want of knowledge of the Divine Majeſty.*

IF they believe there is a God; yet they don't underſtand or conſider what God is: They have no juſt apprehenſions of his infinite glory and majeſty: They have not that inward eſteem and reverence for him in their hearts which his infinite excellencies and perfections do moſt juſtly demand of us.

* Pſal. xiv. 1.

For let any man conſider, whether, if he ſanctified the Lord God in his heart, and had ſuch an awe upon his ſpirit as infinite goodneſs and majeſty demand, he could make uſe of that ſacred name in ſo light and vain a manner as he now does. Surely the man who indulges himſelf in profane ſwearing has not the fear of God before his eyes; nor the love of God in his heart: For if he truly feared God, or heartily loved him, he would not dare, nor would he be inclined to profane his holy name. That fear, that love, which the goſpel requires, would effectually reſtrain men from offering daily affronts to the majeſty of heaven. The great God, conſidering his own divine perfections, and the relation he ſtands in to us, demands our honour and reverence. *If I be a father where is mine honour? If I be a maſter, where is my fear? ſaith the Lord of hoſts.** And ſurely we may aſk every profane ſwearer where is his honour to the Father of the whole creation, and where is his fear of the great Maſter and Ruler of the univerſe? Verily, let ſuch men pretend to what they will, they have no true reverence of God in their hearts: For if they had, it would put them upon treating his holy name in a more decent and becoming manner.

AGAIN, This profaneneſs oftentimes proceeds *from the overflowings of unruly paſſions.*

SOME perſons who at other times refrain from profane ſwearing; yet, give way to it when they fall into a paſſion: For when their paſſions riſe up into a fury they ſeem to want words to vent their rage, and they are excited to make uſe of ſuch words as are moſt ſtrong and emphatical, even tho' it

* Mal. i. 6.

it be to profane the name of God himſelf. But now this is from an evil cauſe: For men ought not to give way to their paſſions, but to reſtrain their anger and rule their ſpirits. And when we feel our paſſions riſing, we muſt take heed that we don't ſin with our tongue, and muſt keep our mouth as with a bridle, that we don't ſpeak profanely or unadviſedly with our lips. And for want of ſuppreſſing our paſſions, and watching over the door of our lips, when paſſions riſe, oh! how many raſh, how many profane words proceed out of men's mouths! Men of ungoverned paſſions, and of unbridled tongues are, as the apoſtle deſcribes them, * *Raging waves of the ſea, foaming out their own ſhame,* in dreadful oaths, in horrid imprecations and curſes, againſt themſelves ſometimes, as well as againſt thoſe they are inraged at.——Again,

PROFANE ſwearing frequently proceeds *from a corrupt diſpoſition to follow evil examples.*

MEN's living in the midſt of a great deal of profaneneſs is apt to lead them into the ſame practice; and altho' it be an unhappineſs to be beſet with ſuch ſore temptations continually; yet it is no ſufficient excuſe: For the rule is, *Follow not a multitude to do evil.* † And, *If ſinners entice thee conſent thou not.* ‡ And it ſhews a very corrupt mind, when perſons out of complaiſance to their companions, and in imitation of them, as polite and faſhionable, will openly and daringly affront their Maker and their Saviour, by profaning his ſacred name. What a mean, pitiful and vile ſpirit is that, which is more afraid of being laughed at by their companions, than to affront their God, and expoſe themſelves to his ſevere revenge?

* Jude 13 ver. † Exod. xxiii. 2. ‡ Prov. i. 10.

FURTHERMORE, This profaneneſs proceeds *from an evil cuſtom contracted.*

AND this ſhews that it proceeds from evil: For it is very ſinful and wicked to accuſtom ourſelves to any vicious practice, by which it becomes ſo much the more difficult to break it off. Why did you begin to ſwear at firſt, how came you to be ſo preſumptuous as ever to begin to break this ſacred law? If you had been careful from the beginning to give glory to God's name, you would not have run yourſelves into ſuch a vile cuſtom: But even now it is no ſufficient excuſe for going on in ſuch a wicked way. Surely, it is far from being a ſufficient excuſe for a man to ſay he has been ſo uſed to ſwear that he does it before he thinks of it: For this only ſhows the greatneſs of his ſin and folly in running on ſo long in ſuch an evil practice as to contract ſuch an evil habit; and inſtead of excuſing himſelf this way for going on in his ſins, he ought to come to a ſtand immediately, leſt by accuſtoming himſelf a little longer, the habit ſhould be ſo fixed that it would be as eaſy for the Ethiopian to change his ſkin, and the Leopard his ſpots, as for him to reform. The thought that you have ſo habituated yourſelf to ſwearing that you hardly know when you do or do not, ſhould be ſo far from quieting you in it, that it ſhould awaken your conſciences to conſider the dangerous and deplorable ſtate you are in, and put you upon watching and praying and ſtriving to the utmoſt, till ſuch a corrupt habit be broken.

As a further evidence that all this profaneneſs proceeds from evil, it may be ſaid that it *oftentimes proceeds from inconſiderateneſs and want of thought.*

MEN

MEN oftentimes go beyond the rule which Chriſt in his goſpel and the apoſtle in our text preſcribe, of ſimple *yeas* and *nays*, for want of due conſideration. Men thro' raſhneſs and heedleſſneſs run into vehement aſſeverations when there is no occaſion for it; and from vehement aſſeverations to profane oaths. But now this raſhneſs and inconſiderateneſs is a ſore evil, and a fatal ſnare to mens ſouls, and ſo is what we ought with all due care to watch againſt. Men are to think of their ways, and to think of their words before they utter them. And it will by no means excuſe the man in uttering a profane oath, to ſay he did not conſider of it: For inconſiderateneſs is the great fault of mankind, and is the cauſe of mens running into innumerable ſins and follies.

HERE let me add one thing more, namely, That this profane ſwearing ſometimes *proceeds from impudent and audacious wickedneſs.*

SOME men are grown ſo exceſſively wicked, as not to be afraid of ſin, or aſhamed of it; but rather glory in their ſhame. So daring are ſome ſinners, and grown to ſuch a pitch of hardneſs and wickedneſs, that they *ſet their mouth againſt the heavens, and their tongue walketh thro' the earth.** The prophet repreſents ſome ſo groſly wicked, as to *curſe* not only *their king, but their God, and look upward.*† They care not how they blaſpheme or profane his ſacred name; and even rack their invention to find out new oaths to affront and provoke the holy one of Iſrael. I have heard of ſuch abandoned wretches, who have vied with one another about ſwearing, and have tried who could invent and ſwear the biggeſt oath; as much as to try

* Pſal. lxxiii. 9. † Iſaiah viii. 21.

try which of them could offer the higheſt affront to the Divine Majeſty. Be aſtoniſhed, O heavens, at this! Be horribly afraid: For theſe are treſpaſſes that riſe up to the very heavens and cry aloud for vengeance.

THUS we ſee how all profane ſwearing and curſing cometh of evil; from an evil heart of unbelief, or for want of due reverence of the Divine Majeſty; from ungoverned paſſions; from evil examples, or evil cuſtoms; from thoughtleſſneſs and inconſiderateneſs; and ſometimes even from moſt impudent and audacious wickedneſs. By all which it appears that profaneneſs proceeds from an unregenerate, carnal, wicked heart. So that we may lay this down for a rule, that ſuch as indulge themſelves in profane ſwearing and addict themſelves to it, are certainly in an unconverted ſtate; and that there is no true and ſaving grace in the hearts of ſuch. For it is impoſſible to ſuppoſe a man in a ſtate of grace will give way to ſuch an horrible ſin as this. *Mind me*, I don't ſay it is impoſſible for a good man, under extreme provocation, to utter a profane oath. But this I am ſure of, that a good man will be very humble for ſuch profaneneſs, and will be very watchful as well as prayerful, leſt he falls into ſuch a temptation. ——— But then,

2dly. PROFANE curſing and ſwearing cometh of evil, as it *cometh from the evil one, that is the Devil.*

So ſome underſtand our Saviour, when he ſays whatſoever is more than theſe cometh of evil,* that is *of the evil one*, the Devil; and ſo it is expreſly ſaid in one of the ancient copies of the new teſtament. The Devil is the enemy of all righteouſneſs,

* Matth. v. 37.

ouſneſs, and the friend, favourer and promoter of all evil; and as to profane ſwearing, we may reaſonably ſuppoſe that it is ſtirred up very much by that wicked one, and that he is a great promoter of the ſame. It is a ſin wherein our ſenſitive appetites are not ſo much concerned; and it is ſo far of a ſpiritual nature as to be much promoted and excited by this evil ſpirit. And we cannot but think that thoſe dreadful oaths that ſome people allow themſelves in, are no leſs than the curſed ſuggeſtions of Satan, and that their tongues are ſet on fire of hell.

And now ſurely this conſideration affords abundant reaſon for us to refrain from ſuch a ſin, and ſtedfaſtly to reſiſt all temptations to it. For, ſhall we hearken to the ſuggeſtions of Satan, who is the enemy of God, of all righteouſneſs, and of our ſouls? Shall we yield to the motions of him who deſires nothing more than that God's name may be blaſphemed and diſhonoured, and our precious ſouls forever deſtroyed? Shall we comply with his inſinuations, who moves and perſuades to nothing but ſin, and who goes about continually ſeeking to devour us? He wiſhes for nothing more than to bring us into the ſame condemnation with himſelf: And therefore it is that he does all he can to provoke men to ſwear, and curſe and damn, becauſe he knows that God will not hold ſuch guiltleſs. He puts perſons in their wrath upon damning themſelves, and damning one another, in hopes that God will take them at their word, and it ſhall be with them according to their paſſionate and furious wiſhes. And now, what a ſolid and moving argument is here, to reſiſt all temptations to profaueneſs; for as they come

come from the evil one, we may be ſure there is a ſnare, and that our eternal ruin is aimed at herein.

I proceed now, by ſome other conſiderations, further to ſet forth the evil of profane ſwearing, and ſo the reaſonableneſs and neceſſity of utterly laying it aſide, and baniſhing it out of all converſation.——So then,

4thly. This is a ſin which above all ſhould be laid aſide: Becauſe *it is the moſt fooliſh and unreaſonable in itſelf, and for which there is the leaſt to be ſaid by way of apology or excuſe.*

Altho' every ſin is unreaſonable and unprofitable; and will be found ſo in the concluſion; yet perhaps there is no ſin that appears ſo unreaſonable and ſo unprofitable as profane ſwearing. In other ſins there is the gratification of ſome luſt or other. In ſome ſins there is the gratification of pride: In others covetouſneſs, or an inordinate love of the world, is gratified: In other ſins the ſenſitive, carnal and brutiſh appetites are pleaſed: But now it is difficult to find what luſt is gratified, or what advantage, even for the preſent, is gained by profane ſwearing. There is no profit nor honour, and one would think there is no pleaſure in rapping out vain oaths. So that profane ſwearing ſeems to be ſinning, even for ſinning ſake: As if we would do it meerly to affront the great God, and bring guilt upon our own heads. What honour can there be in abuſing our noble powers of ſpeech in blaſpheming or profaning the ſacred name of that God who gave us our tongues, and all our ſpeaking powers? And what gain or profit can there be in curſing and ſwearing? By the ſins of robbery, theft, fraud, injuſtice and oppreſſion,

oppreſſion, men propoſe and oftentimes do get ſomething of the world, to anſwer ſome preſent purpoſes of life to feed and cloath them, yea and to enrich them for a little while. But what is gotten by profane ſwearing? Who hires you to utter your profane oaths, and who will pay you for ſwearing but the Devil, whoſe work you do, and what wages do you expect from him? And the ſins of intemperance and uncleanneſs gratify the carnal deſires and ſenſual appetites: But now even theſe brutiſh appetites are not gratified by profane ſwearing.

5thly. ANOTHER good reaſon againſt *profane ſwearing* in common converſation is, *That it tends to deſtroy the uſe of oaths in thoſe caſes wherein they are both lawful and expedient.*

IT is no breach of charity to ſuppoſe that they who uſe themſelves to profane ſwearing do not fear an oath as they ought to do. For who can think that they who will repeat an oath or curſe upon any trifling occaſion, and without conſidering whether the thing be true or falſe, will be likely to be ſo careful to ſee to the truth of every article they may be called ſolemnly to ſwear about? Who can think a man will have a proper awe upon his ſpirit in taking a ſolemn oath before authority, as he ought to have, when he uſes himſelf to profane ſwearing every day?——Indeed I wont pretend to ſay but that ſome who are guilty of a great deal of profane ſwearing, yet when they are called ſolemnly to ſwear to any certain point, will be careful to ſay nothing upon oath but the truth: But then it muſt needs hold good as a general truth, that they who accuſtom themſelves to profane ſwearing will be apt

to make light of an oath ſolemnly adminiſtred to them: Or if they themſelves ſhould make a difference between ſolemn oaths and their profane oaths, ſo as to ſwear to nothing but the truth, when called by authority to ſwear; yet it will by no means afford that ſatisfaction to others: It will not afford ſuch confirmation of the truth as an oath is deſigned for. What can induce us to think that man has a due regard to an oath, and a proper awe upon his ſpirit, in that ſolemn appeal to God, as there is in an oath; when we ſee and hear him make light of oaths, continually venting them every day upon the moſt trifling occaſion. If men never practiced profane ſwearing themſelves, and never heard an oath but when adminiſtred in a public ſolemn manner, and upon ſome important neceſſary occaſion, the good deſign of oaths would be much more effectually anſwered than they are at preſent. For by the many vain and profane oaths which are among us, the good deſign of ſolemn oaths in many caſes is very much loſt; and it is to be feared that a great deal of perjury and falſe ſwearing is crept not only into the cuſtom-houſe but into our courts and judicatories.

I think by the law of the land any perſon convicted of perjury is never after admitted to an oath upon any occaſion, and that for theſe two very good reaſons, firſt of all to be a mark of perpetual infamy upon the man, and ſo to be a terror to others; and in the ſecond place becauſe the man having once perjured himſelf, there is no ſecurity againſt his doing it again, and ſo his oath in another caſe may not be depended upon: And if the law was extended to all notorious profane ſwearers, ſo as not to admit

them

them to any ſolemn oath, it might have ſome happy effect, not only to reſtore and eſtabliſh the credit of ſacred and ſolemn oaths; but alſo to reſtrain this abominable vice of profane ſwearing. For ſome who will not be reſtrained by the plain prohibitions and awful threatnings of God, may be *taught*, at leaſt externally, *the fear of God by the precepts of men.**

BEFORE I diſmiſs this head, I will mention to you the obſervation of a learned expoſitor,† who ſays the laſt words of my text ſhould be rather read according to ſeveral of the ancient copies, *leſt ye fall into hypocriſy*, inſtead of *leſt ye fall into condemnation*, joining ὑπὸ κρισιν into one word, εἰς ὑπόκρισιν, as ſeveral copies have it. Now hypocriſy conſiſts in diſſembling or falſe ſpeaking, and the free uſe of profane oaths has a tendency to this. He who makes no conſcience of an oath, but will utter them in a profane manner as freely as he ſpeaks, we have little reaſon to think will make conſcience of his words; but will be very careleſs about them, whether they be true or falſe. A man who uſes himſelf to ſwearing, will doubtleſs fall into a way of diſſembling and deceit; ſo that at length there will be no dependance upon what he ſays, even altho' he ſhould ſwear to it; and by this means the uſe of ſpeech, as well as of oaths, will be very much loſt.

6thly. THE horrid evil of profane ſwearing, and the infinite reaſonableneſs of refraining from it, appears from this conſideration, That *it expoſes to a moſt dreadful condemnation.*

THIS is the argument uſed in the text, according to our tranſlation. Above all things, my brethr n,

* Iſaiah xxix. 13. † Dr. Hammond in loc.

ſwear not, &c. *leſt ye fall into condemnation.* There is no ſin that more certainly expoſes to condemnation than profaneneſs. It lays us open to the condemnation of God and man.

1ſt. *It expoſes to the condemnation of man.*——For there are no ſober and ſerious chriſtians but what condemn all profane ſwearing as abominable. And chriſtian governments have all along made laws for the cenſuring and puniſhing that vice. How many laws have been made in this land, one in addition to another for the more effectual ſuppreſſing ſuch an horrible ſin? So that the profane ſwearer is condemned of every good man; The law of man condemns him, and he becomes liable to ſhame and puniſhment thereby, and it is for want of zeal and courage to execute the good and wholeſome laws of the land, that profane ſwearers have not more frequently been made examples of juſtice and brought to public ſhame and puniſhment. And if the good and wholſome laws in this caſe made and provided, were duly executed, profane ſwearers would be deſpiſed, they would be deprived of every office, and judged unworthy of any place of honour or truſt. What might reaſonably be expected from all thoſe who truly fear God and honour his ſacred name, but that they ſhould agree to pour contempt upon all profane perſons; and inſtead of putting honour upon them, to load them with diſgrace? This is part of the character of a citizen of Zion, *In whoſe eyes a vile perſon is condemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord.**——But then,

2dly. SUCH expoſe themſelves to the *more dreadful condemnation of God Almighty.* THIS

* Pſal. xv. 4.

THIS is a damning ſin; for the Lord will not hold him guiltleſs who taketh his name in vain. If ſuch profane ſwearers ſhould thro' the ſinful indifference of man and unfaithfulneſs of officers, eſcape puniſhment from men; yet depend upon it the Lord our God will not ſuffer them to eſcape his righteous judgment. God threatned his people Iſrael of old, that if they did *not fear that glorious and fearful name,* THE LORD THEIR GOD, *he would make their plagues wonderful.** So again, *If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, ſaith the Lord of hoſts, I will even ſend a curſe upon you, and I will curſe your bleſſings; yea I have curſed them already, becauſe ye do not lay it to heart.*† And the flying roll in Zechariah's viſion, contained an expreſs curſe againſt ſwearing in a particular manner.‡ So that all ſuch as allow themſelves in falſe or profane ſwearing, are under the condemning ſentence of almighty God, and liable to his wrath and curſe, to all the judgments and calamities of this world, and to the torments and miſeries of the world to come. And who can conceive the torment and miſery reſerved for the profane ſwearer in hell? In the parable of the ſick man and Lazarus, it is repreſented that the rich man when in hell begged for *a drop of water to cool his tongue,* that was tormented in the flames.§ And now whoſe tongues can we think will be ſo ſcorched and tormented in theſe flames, as thoſe which have been defiled with profane curſing and ſwearing, by which they ſhow that even now they are ſet on fire even as of hell. But alas! what relief can they expect

* Deut. xxviii. 58, 59. † Mal. ii. 2. ‡ Zech. v. 4.
§ Luke xvi. 24.

expect from him, whoſe name they have profaned, and whom they have as it were dared to do his worſt.

And now I hope by this time you are convinced of the infinite evil there is in all unwarrantable and profane curſing and ſwearing, and how infinitely reaſonable it is to renounce and abandon ſuch a curſed vice; and that they who perſiſt herein muſt needs be guilty of the groſſeſt ſin and folly. Surely it may be ſaid of all profane ſwearers, and who perſiſt therein, "that madneſs is in in their hearts whilſt they live, and after that they go down to the congregation of the dead."

I now proceed to the 3d general head, viz.

III. To conſider the meaning of that divine direction of the apoſtle in the text, *Let your yea, be yea, and your nay, nay.*

And here let me ſay,

1ſt. It doubtleſs is to be underſtood, that in all our common converſation we ſhould content ourſelves *with ſimple affirmations and negations, without any thing further to confirm the truth of what we ſay.*

We are not to underſtand the apoſtle as if we were to confine ourſelves critically to *yea* and *nay*; as if theſe monoſyllables were only to be uſed in affirming or denying any thing. But what he means, is that chriſtians ſhould uſe themſelves to ſuch a ſimple way of ſpeaking in their converſing together. That when a thing is true, they ſhould affirm it to be true; And if it be falſe, to ſay it is falſe, without uſing themſelves to any vehement aſſeverations about the matter; much leſs to go to confirm any trifle with an oath.

It is not for chriſtians in their common converſations to uſe themſelves to ſuch aſſeverations as theſe, viz. *As I live*, it is ſo or ſo; or *it is as certain as I have an exiſtence*. Much leſs may we go on to ſay, *As I hope to be ſaved* it is ſo or ſo. Nor, as others will expreſs themſelves, *If it was the laſt word that ever I ſhould ſpeak*; or, *If I ſhould drop down dead this minute*, I would affirm or deny. Much leſs may we run into ſuch further degrees of extravagance as ſome will do, and ſay, *I wiſh I may never ſpeak another word; I wiſh I may drop down dead this minute* if what I ſay be not true. And a multitude of ſuch vehement aſſeverations and raſh expreſſions men are apt to make uſe of, thinking thereby to gain the greater credit or regard to what they ſay.

But now, as the goſpel diſallows all ſwearing in ſuch caſes; ſo does it all ſuch vehement aſſeverations in ordinary converſation.—I don't ſay, but that in caſes of importance, and things ſtrange and hard to be credited, men may go ſo far at leaſt as to repeat the yea or the nay, and ſay *yea verily*, it is ſo; as our Saviour ſometimes introduces a matter of importance with a *verily, verily*, I ſay unto you. But that which the goſpel moſt approves in common diſcourſe one with another, is the bare, plain, and ſimple affirming or denying, as the matter is true or falſe: And not to accuſtom ourſelves to vehement aſſeverations, much leſs to oaths and imprecations.

2. It is to be underſtood that we always take care *to ſpeak truly in all things, as much as if we were under oath*. That we ſee to it that our *yea* be *yea*, that is, that what we affirm is true; and that our *nay* be *nay*, and that all things be as we ſay they are.

What

WHAT the apoſtle, and Chriſt before him, recommends to chriſtians, is always to ſpeak the truth one to another, without any oath, or ſo much as any ſtrong vehement aſſeveration. That chriſtians ſhould maintain ſuch a conſtant ſtedfaſt regard to truth, as to take all poſſible care never to ſwerve from it in any of their aſſertions, declarations, or promiſes. We muſt always ſee to it, that our *yea* be *yea*; that is, that we ſee to it that we ſpeak of things as they really are, at leaſt as they appear to us to be: And our *nay, nay*; that is, when we ſay a thing is not, that we be well perſwaded and aſſured in our own minds that it is not. So in all our promiſes we muſt ſee that our *yea* be *yea*, and that our words and actions do all correſpond: That what is *yea* in word may be *yea* in deed. And ſo that our words and profeſſions with our actions towards each other be of a piece.

NOW this the goſpel recommends as what would infinitely better anſwer the end than oaths or vehement aſſeverations: For when men uſe themſelves to a ſimplicity and godly ſincerity in all their words and deeds, they will gain ſuch credit with mankind, that their bare *yeas* and *nays* will be much more regarded than the moſt vehement aſſeverations or oaths of others. The way which the apoſtles took to gain credit, was by taking ſpecial care to have a plain correſpondence between their words and their behaviour, between their words at one time and at another. Our word, ſays Paul, was not *yea* and *nay*: That is, we did not contradict ourſelves, ſaying this thing now, and the contrary ſome time after. But it was now yea, and then yea:

yea: It was all conſiſtent and correſpondent, like the promiſes of Chriſt, *which are in him yea, and in him amen.** And if perſons would endeavour to be always conſiſtent with themſelves, and to have a ſtrict regard to truth in all they affirm, and in all that they promiſe, it would ſuperſede all the uſe we can poſſibly ſuppoſe of aſſeverations or oaths. Let perſons take care to ſpeak of things juſt as they are; things that are falſe as falſe, things that are true as true, things that are doubtful and uncertain as ſuch: and let men be punctual in fulfilling their word and promiſes, and their credit will be ſo well eſtabliſhed, that their *yea* and their *nay* will be abundantly ſufficient to ſatisfy every man who knows them that they are concerned with. And would to God that people were more careful in this matter, and would ſee to it that their bare *yea* be indeed *yea*, and their *nay, nay*; that they would always repreſent things juſtly and truly as they are, and be the ſame men at one time and at another, the ſame men in one company and in another. In ſhort this having the *yea, yea*, and the *nay, nay*, is to have a ſimplicity and godly ſincerity as a principle in the heart, producing a ſpeech and behaviour correſpondent herewith. And when this is made conſpicuous, their bare *yeas* and *nays* will fully anſwer the end, and will be abundantly more regarded than the moſt vehement aſſeverations or oaths of others. For they who have no more reverence for God than to profane his name, will be juſtly ſuſpected as not having that reverence for truth itſelf as always to adhere cloſely to it. Whereas let a man upon all occaſions ſhew a ſtrict regard to truth in all his declarations and promiſes, and it will very

* 2 Cor. i. 18, 19, 20.

much ſuperſede the uſe of oaths. Agreeable to that obſervation I find quoted from Philo. "It is beſt not to ſwear at all, but to take ſuch care of ſpeaking truth with every man that our words may be thought to be oaths." And from Joſephus, who ſays concerning a certain ſect of Jews, "that all which was ſaid by them was ſtronger than an oath, and ſwearing was forbidden by them,—affirming that that man was already condemned as unfit to be truſted, when he is not believed without calling God to witneſs."*

THUS I have finiſhed the ſeveral heads by which I propoſed to open and explain the text, and to ſet forth the dreadful ſin of perjury, and of profane ſwearing, at the ſame time recommending a ſimple, honeſt, plain way of ſpeaking, without any profane oaths or ſo much as vehement aſſeverations in common converſation.

I now proceed to the APPLICATION, in which I purpoſe to be very particular, and ſhall labour after ſuch cloſeneſs, plainneſs, and pungency as may ſtir up conviction in the hearts and conſciences of every guilty perſon before the Lord. And may the divine almighty Spirit accompany our ſerious and earneſt expoſtulations ſo into the hearts of all, as that this crying and abominable vice of profane ſwearing may be born down, and all hands may agree to root it out.

AND the firſt inference I ſhall draw from the ſubject before us is this, viz.

1ſt. *That all ſuch muſt needs be exceeding guilty who allow themſelves in any unlawful ſwearing*

BY whom I mean both thoſe who have forſworn themſelves, and have the guilt of perjury lying upon

* Vid. Dr. Hammond in loc.

on them, and thoſe who have fallen into vain, raſh or profane ſwearing. As to the former, if there be any who have been left to the ſin of perjury, conſidering the heinous nature of that ſin, there muſt needs be a moſt heavy load of guilt lying upon them: For we can hardly think of a more heinous, a more preſumptuous ſin that is ever committed, or that expoſes to a ſorer condemnation.——And as to the latter, viz. that of profane ſwearing, it is to be feared that many who indulge themſelves in it, do not conſider the horrid nature of this ſin; for if they did, it would be impoſſible to go on in the daily, hourly practice of it, as ſome men do, and yet ſeem to have no ſenſe of ſin and guilt, nor any remorſe of conſcience about the matter. Surely thoſe perſons muſt either be exceeding ignorant of ſin, and of the pure and holy nature of God; or under a dreadful ſtupidity, and even ſearedneſs of conſcience; who can be quiet and eaſy in a courſe of profane ſwearing: For he who knows and conſiders, muſt ſee it is infinitely offenſive to an holy and jealous God, as well as grievous to all ſerious chriſtians. This ſin of profaneneſs is a direct affront to the infinite Majeſty of heaven. It is treating his great and holy name with neglect and contempt, yea even with mockery and inſult. And who can think that he will hold ſuch guiltleſs? Surely God will ſometime or other bring ſuch to ſee their ſin and wickedneſs either by opening their eyes and bringing them to true repentance in this world, or by bringing the weight of all their profane oaths and horrid imprecations upon their own heads in the world to come, when they ſhall know by ſad experience what that

damnation is, which they ſo lightly, vainly and wantonly wiſh to themſelves and to one another.

2d. *What an aſtoniſhing thing is it, that ever ſuch a baſe and abominable ſin as this of profane ſwearing, ſhould prevail in the world.*

For it is ſuch a baſe and fooliſh way of affronting the Majeſty of heaven: It is ſuch a vain, empty and unprofitable ſin, that it is hard to find any honor or profit, or indeed any pleaſure in it. So that it ſeems ſtrange and unaccountable that mankind ſhould ever fall into it. And all that can be ſaid is, that the heart of man is become ſo corrupt, deceitful, and deſperately wicked, that there is nothing too fooliſh or abſurd, nothing too wicked and preſumptuous, nothing too dangerous or daring for fooliſh wicked man to come into. The heart of man is now become the ſink of all ſin and wickedneſs. So our Saviour who perfectly knew what was in man, obſerves concerning him, *Out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, theſts, falſe witneſs, blaſphemies.** Conſidering the corrupt heart of man, there is nothing too bad to be expected from man. But did we not ſee and know the corruption of human nature, we ſhould be aſtoniſhed at the bold, the impious, the profane, preſumptuous and even blaſphemous treatment of God's great and holy name, which ſome men addict themſelves to.

3d. *What matter of lamentation is it that our land is ſo dreadfully defiled with horrible profaneneſs?*

By ſwearing and lying the land of Iſrael was defiled.† And alas is not this the ſtate and caſe of our land

* Matt. xv. 19. † Hoſea iv. 2.

land at this very day? Is it not to be feared that the land is defiled with perjury; and that ſome perſons have been ſo far from fearing an oath, that they have in certain caſes to ſerve a friend, or a turn of their own, ſworn to known abſolute falſhoods? And is it not to be feared, that there are a great many vain and needleſs oaths, and that oaths are multiplied in many caſes where there is not any real occaſion for them? But as to profane ſwearing and curſing and damning, oh! how dreadfully does it abound in our land? How has this curſed vice crept in, and very much overſpread the land, eſpecially among the younger people and the riſing generation!

In the days of our forefathers a profane oath was ſcarce heard in our land: But now how are our ſtreets, our markets, our taverns, and all places of concourſe filled with them? Which ſhews the dreadful declenſions and degeneracies that are among us. And gives us reaſon to fear that this is one of the heinous provoking ſins which will bring down the divine judgments upon us in an awful degree and manner except we repent. If a ſtop be not put to the flood of profane ſwearing and curſing, we may juſtly expect divine judgments as a flood to break in upon us and overwhelm us.

4th. *What a loud call is here to all perſons of every denomination, in a public or private capacity, to exert ourſelves to the utmoſt for the reſtraining, and if poſſible the ſuppreſſing this crying and abominable ſin of profaneneſs?*

Above all things, my brethren, ſwear not. Altho' we are to ſtrive againſt every ſin, yet the apoſtle ſeems to urge this upon chriſtian brethren in a more eſpecial manner to refrain from ſinful ſwearing,

ſwearing, and do our utmoſt that ſuch a curſed vile ſin may be born down and rooted out.——Now the exhortation ſpeaketh,

1ſt. To all *perſons in any place of power and truſt whatever; yea to all ſerious chriſtians*; that we do our utmoſt, in our ſeveral places, to reſtrain, ſuppreſs and root out this abominable ſin of profane ſwearing.

WHILST the cry of profaneneſs reaches up to heaven, the voice of the Lord crieth to magiſtrates, to miniſters, to heads of colleges and of ſchools, to ſheriffs and conſtables, to grand-jurors, tything-men and wardens, to parents, and all heads of families, and in ſhort to all the true friends of religion, to beſtir ourſelves in this matter. I ſay, the great God, whoſe name is holy and jealous, loudly calls upon us all, to do our utmoſt, in our ſeveral places, that his holy name may not be blaſphemed or profaned among us; and that every one of us, according to our capacities and opportunities, exert ourſelves for bearing down and beating out of countenance ſuch an abominable ſin.——And here let me ſay,

1ſt. THE honour of God calls for it.

GOD's honour and glory is greatly concerned in this matter: For when is God's name more diſhonoured, than when it is uſed and caſt about in a blaſphemous or profane manner? Now God is greatly concerned for the honour of his own name; and he expects or requires that we ſhould be ſo too. God honours us by the ſeveral ſtations and relations of life that he has placed us in: And there is all the reaſon in the world then that we ſhould honour him; and that we ſhould be jealous and zealous for the

the Lord of hoſts, and ſo for the honour of his name. And the more we do ſo for the honour of his name, the more honour will he put upon us. *Them that honour me I will honour; and they that deſpiſe me ſhall be lightly eſteemed.**

2. *The oath of God, and every ſacred obligation we are under, obliges us to it.*

ALL civil officers, of higher or lower rank, are bound by a ſolemn oath to do what in them lies, according to their reſpective offices, to ſuppreſs all vice and immorality, and to ſee that the good and wholſome laws of the land, and ſo this againſt profane ſwearing, be duly executed. And the charge given to miniſters at their ordination is equal to the moſt ſolemn oath, and obliges them to cry aloud againſt this ſin of profaneneſs, and to rebuke ſharply thoſe who offend in this point. And the covenant which parents enter into to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and the holy covenant which chriſtian brethren enter into, to watch over one another for their good, are as ſo many oaths or ſacred bonds, with which we have bound our ſouls. So that we may all look upon ourſelves under the oath and covenant of God to oppoſe this horrible ſin of profaneneſs; and to do our utmoſt that our families, the town, and every ſociety, and even the whole land, might be purged from ſuch a crying ſin.

3. *Love to our neighbours* calls for the faithful and ſtrenuous endeavours of all to ſuppreſs this abominable ſin.

THE great law of charity requires us to be as truly concerned for our neighbours good as for our own:

* 1 Sam. ii. 30.

own: And conſequently, when we ſee our neighbours running aſtray in the broad paths of deſtruction, that we ſhould faithfully warn them of their danger, and endeavour to reduce them. *Thou ſhalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; but ſhalt in any wiſe rebuke him, and not ſuffer ſin upon him,* that is to reſt upon him.* Now therefore, when we hear any perſon profaning the holy name of God, charity obliges us to do what in us lies to convince ſuch a perſon of his ſin and danger, and do what belongs to us by counſels, by reproofs, by warnings, by corrections, or puniſhments, to bring him off from ſuch a corrupt and wicked practice. And if we neglect or refuſe to do what belongs to us, in our ſeveral places and relations, to reſtrain perſons from this deſtructive and damning ſin, we fail in our charity towards them. Don't we hate that perſon in our heart, rather than truly love him, whom we ſhall ſee going on in the direct way to hell, and take no care to reclaim and recover him? Now perſons who indulge themſelves in profane ſwearing and curſing, and damning, are in the direct way to hell: And how can we exerciſe greater love, charity and compaſſion towards them, than to labour by all proper means to convince, to humble and reform them? And is it not the greateſt unkindneſs, yea even cruelty, to ſuch, to let them go on unrebuked for their ſin?

4. *The ſafety and proſperity of the land* calls for a zealous and courageous appearance againſt this ſin.

THIS is one of the ſins that moſt horribly defile the land, and expoſe a people as ſuch to the judgments of heaven. Thus God threatens his people that if they

* Lev. xix. 17.

they did not fear that glorious and fearful name *The Lord their God*, that the Lord would *make their plagues wonderful, and the plagues of their ſeed.** And have we not reaſon to think that the profaneneſs which has of late obtained and abounds in our land, ſtirs up the divine anger againſt us, and ſpreads a dark cloud over us at this day? Now therefore if we have any regard for the public good, if we are concerned to have God's anger turned away from this people, the divine judgments averted, and that glory might ſtill dwell in our land, we muſt every one of us in our places exert ourſelves with a becoming zeal and courage, for ſuppreſſing all impiety and profaneneſs. For who can think that impending judgments will be diverted, or God's anger be turned away from us, ſo long as his ſacred name is blaſphemed or profaned among us?

5. *The peace of our own minds* calls for a vigorous oppoſition to this heinous ſin.

For, as we are under peculiar obligations upon the account of the ſeveral offices we ſuſtain, or the relations of life we ſtand in, to appear openly for the honour of God, and ſo for ſuppreſſing a ſpirit of profaneneſs; ſo we cannot diſcharge a good conſcience in the neglect hereof. And conſcience, if it be alive, and not paſt feeling, muſt needs upbraid and accuſe us, if we ſuffer openly profane ſwearers to go unrebuked and uncorrected. And therefore, the man who would have his conſcience witneſſing for him, and ſo have peace within, muſt bear his part in ſuppreſſing this deteſtable vice. What true peace can that man have who frequently hears the glorious and holy name of God blaſphemed

* Deut. xxviii. 58, 59.

and profaned, without ſhowing himſelf offended, or without reproving or correcting the offender?

THUS we ſee that there are many and very weighty conſiderations why all of us, of every order, ſhould beſtir ourſelves in this matter, and, if poſſible, prevent this ſin, this growing faſhionable vice from getting head among us: And that our endeavours herein may be the more ſucceſsful, let me hint at two or three things by way of direction.

1ſt. *Let us keep ourſelves as remote from this ſin as poſſible.*

IT will be in vain to pretend to ſuppreſs this ſin in others, ſo long as we indulge it in ourſelves. The firſt way to diſcountenance this vice muſt be by *example;* taking all poſſible care that a profane word don't at any time ſlip out of our lips. We may not allow ourſelves in any kind or degree of profaneneſs; but always maintain a reverence for the name of God, ſo as not to mention the ſame without ſome decency and ſolemnity of ſpirit. And unleſs we are thus careful ourſelves, all other endeavours will ſignify but little. And indeed how ſhould we have the face to reprove or correct others for that which we allow in ourſelves? It concerns us therefore to take the utmoſt care that we don't give the leaſt countenance to this ſin by any example of our own.

AND, O my hearers! ſeriouſly conſider, I beſeech you, how ſad it will be, if you yourſelves ſhould be ſo criminal and unhappy as to ſet the example of profane curſing and ſwearing before your children and young people; and if they ſhould learn this language of hell at your mouth; and

ſhould

ſhould have it to charge upon you in the day of judgment, that it was YOU who taught them to curſe and ſwear, and that they were trained up in that curſed practice from their youth by YOUR example. And Oh! that parents, and thoſe who are in any ſuperior ſtation, who are guilty in this matter would ſeriouſly conſider what they will have to ſay for themſelves in the day of judgment, when not only their own conſciences, but the very children of their own bowels ſhall thus accuſe them.

2. *We muſt not connive at this ſin in any.*

THIS ſin is not to be winked at in high or low, ſmall or great; nor may we ever let it paſs without manifeſting that it is offenſive to us. We muſt always preſerve ſuch a tender regard for the honour of God's name as never to hear it blaſphemed or profaned, without teſtifying our diſpleaſure at it. Such an affront offered to the great God, ſhould always touch us to the quick; and we muſt make it evident to thoſe who beſt know us, that we are more concerned for the honour of God than for the favour of men, even of the higheſt of them.

3. *We may not diſcourage, but on the contrary encourage the due proſecution of offenders in this point.*

FOR as it requires zeal, vigour and courage to proſecute offenders according to the law of God or man, ſo perſons who are conſcientiouſly concerned to bear due teſtimony againſt this ſin, are not to be diſheartned or diſcouraged herein: But rather are to be countenanced, commended and ſtrengthned in all proper methods to ſuppreſs this vice. Whereas, if ſuch perſons are ridiculed, brow-beaten and reproached for their laudable attempts to bear down

this ſin, it will be to ſtrengthen the wicked in their wickedneſs, and make them more daring and preſumptuous.———Therefore,

4. INSTEAD of conniving at ſuch profaneneſs, *we muſt rather ſearch it out, that it might be expoſed.*

THIS is an iniquity that ought to be ſearched out, that it might be openly cenſured and condemned. Ways and means are to be made uſe of for the detecting ſuch a vice; and as for thoſe who are ear witneſſes of horrible profaneneſs, they ought to reprove and warn the guilty in ſuch a manner as wiſdom ſhall direct. And when the offence is public and open, they are to be expoſed to the penalties of the law, and to the cenſures of the church: And when there is a general rumour and report of the prevalence of ſuch a ſin, thoſe who are appointed to inſpect the manners of people, and are to be eyes to the church, to the town or county, would do well to ſearch out ſuch a matter, and not ſuffer ſuch a ſin to get head and prevail, meerly becauſe there are none who will trouble themſelves about it. Surely it becomes us to ſhew ourſelves *on the Lord's ſide, to ſtand up for him againſt the evil doers, and to riſe up for him againſt the workers of iniquity.*

5. WHENEVER therefore any groſs profaneneſs is made open and public, *we muſt all agree in our places to bear due teſtimony againſt it, and unite in the condemnation of the ſame.*

MINISTERS muſt cry aloud againſt this ſin and not ſpare. They muſt rebuke ſuch offenders ſharply, publickly and before all, diſpenſing the diſcipline of the church unto them. Magiſtrates muſt execute the good and wholeſome laws of the land upon them. Heads of colleges muſt puniſh any ſuch daring preſumptuous

ſumptuous youth under their care, according to the ſtatutes and ordinances of ſuch ſocieties. Schoolmaſters according to the good rules and cuſtoms of ſchools. Parents and heads of families muſt admoniſh and correct their children and houſhold according to the wiſdom and power that God has given them. And we muſt one and all agree to frown upon every profane perſon, and hold him in great contempt. In our eyes ſuch vile perſons are to be deſpiſed, whilſt we honour them who fear the Lord. And if contempt was conſtantly poured out upon profane ſwearers as vile ſcandalous perſons; and it was made to appear to them, that all wiſe good men deſpiſed them, diſliked and ſhunned their company, I believe it would be one of the beſt external means of correcting ſuch a growing vice, and of putting it out of countenance.

2dly. THE exhortation ſpeaketh loudly *to all thoſe who have been guilty of profane ſwearing, and who indulge themſelves in ſuch an horrible vice.*

AND if there be any ſuch before the Lord at this time, I would, as a miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt, and as a meſſenger of the Lord of hoſts, addreſs myſelf to you in the moſt ſerious and ſolemn manner. And may the great and the holy God, whom you have highly offended by your profaneneſs, of his infinite mercy and grace, incline and enable you ſo to hear as that your ſouls may live.

1ſt. *Be deeply humble before God, for your having thus offended and provoked his holy Majeſty.*

CONSIDER, I beſeech you, what affront and indignity you have offered to the great, the holy, and the jealous God, whilſt you in a profane manner have made uſe of his holy name; whilſt you have in

ſport

ſport and jeſt, or in pride and paſſion, toſſed about that ſacred and reverend name of the LORD OUR GOD. O humble yourſelves to think how often you have broken that holy commandment, which upon the ſevereſt pains and penalties forbids the taking God's name in vain. O be humble, humble to the very duſt, to think that that glorious name, which is infinitely exalted above every name, and to which the moſt profound reverence is due, has been profaned by you: That that glorious name, at which every angel in heaven bows in humble adoration, has been as it were trampled under your feet, and treated as an unholy thing.

2. *Admire and adore the infinite patience and forbearance of God; that notwithſtanding all the horrid oaths and dreadful imprecations that have proceeded out of your lips, he hath not as yet taken vengeance on you.*

WHAT a wonder of divine patience is it, that notwithſtanding all your ſwearing, curſing and damning, God has not taken you at your word, and curſed and damned you beyond all remedy before this time? O profane ſinners! conſider, I beſeech you, what would have been your caſe, if God had taken you at your word in your profane, paſſionate, angry ſpeeches, wiſhing death and damnation to yourſelves, as well as to all about you. Conſider how much better God has been to you than your own words and wiſhes have expreſſed; and has ſpared you when you yourſelves have as it were dared and called upon him to deſtroy you. You who have been ſo much for curſing and damning yourſelves and one another: Conſider, that if God had

had not been more kind and merciful to you than you have been to yourſelves, you would have been in the ſtate of eternal damnation before this time.

3. *Cry mightily to God for pardoning mercy thro' Jeſus Chriſt.*

INDEED God has ſaid he will not hold ſuch guiltleſs who take his name in vain. However, this is not to be underſtood as if there was no forgiveneſs for this ſin. For though it be a very heinous ſin, and may be conſidered as a ſort of blaſphemy; yet it is to be hoped that it is not that blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt that ſhall never be forgiven, unleſs you obſtinately perſiſt in it. Thro' the infinite merits of Chriſt's blood there is forgiveneſs even for this ſin, and plenteous redemption for the moſt profane and profligate wretch who repents. Well then, O profane ſinner! whoever you are, by an eye of faith look to God thro' Jeſus for the pardon of this and all your other ſins. Look, look to that very blood, to that bleſſed and glorious name, which you have in a vain contemptuous manner as it were trodden under foot.

4. *Now reſolve by the grace of God to forſake this accurſed practice.*

LET profane ſwearing appear a moſt abominable ſin to you, and that which your ſoul hates. And now reſolve in the moſt ſerious, firm and fixed manner, to break off from it. Reſolve ſo far as in you lies that a profane oath ſhall never again proceed out of your mouth: And that you will watch over the door of your lips, that you may not offend with your tongue.—But theſe reſolutions muſt be formed not in your own ſtrength, but in a humble dependence upon

upon the grace of Chriſt, which is ſufficient for you. If you depend only upon your own ſtrength theſe reſolutions will fail. It is only the power and grace of Chriſt that can fortify our reſolutions, and enable us to keep them.

AND now to move you thus to reſolve againſt and actually to forſake all profane ſwearing and curſing, and as a means to ſtrengthen your reſolutions in this matter, I ſhall offer a few things to your moſt ſerious conſideration.

1. *Conſider from what a corrupt principle this ſin of profane ſwearing and curſing proceeds.*

NOW it muſt needs be from the atheiſm and infidelity of your hearts, or from the want of fear and love or holy reverence of the divine Majeſty; or from ſome corrupt habit contracted, or evil cuſtom you have fallen into, in a ſinful compliance with your evil companions, and to ſhow that you are no more afraid of profaning the name of God than they. And, in ſhort, an indulged habit of profane ſwearing muſt needs proceed from an unregenerate heart. For it cannot be ſuppoſed that they who indulge themſelves in profane ſwearing and curſing have any true grace in their hearts: For true grace gives ſuch a reverence of the great and holy God, as would effectually reſtrain us from all allowed profaneneſs; ſo long therefore as you go on allowedly in profaning the name of God, you are in the gall of bitterneſs and bond of iniquity.

2. *Conſider what an high affront it is to the Majeſty of heaven to uſe his ſacred name in a light and profane manner.*

CAN you bear to have your own name traduced or treated with contempt? And how do you think the

the great God can bear to have his glorious and fearful name toſſed about in a vain light manner, in your ſports and jeſts, in your pride or paſſions?

3. *Conſider what an horrible abuſe it is of your ſpeaking powers.*

THE power of ſpeech is one of the noble faculties that diſtinguiſh us from the brute creatures. And it is called *our glory.* * And ſhall we employ the tongue, which is our glory, and by which we are enabled in an active way to give glory to God, in abuſing and profaning his name? Shall we, inſtead of celebrating the praiſes of God with our tongues, which were given us for that end, put contempt upon that glorious and fearful name, and as it were trample upon it?

4. *Conſider how by profaneneſs you contradict your prayers.*

IF you ever pray, very likely, you ſometimes uſe the words of the Lord's prayer; in which you pray ſaying, *Hallowed,* or ſanctified or glorified, *be thy name.* And now how abſurd is this, to pray that God's name may be *ſanctified,* and immediately after go to *profaning* it? How does it look, O profane ſinner! one minute to be praying, *Hallowed* ſanctified *be thy name,* the next minute, or preſently after, to rap out ſome profane oath or other?

5. AGAIN, Conſider *what inconſiſtencies* ſome people are guilty of, *who will manifeſt great external reverence to ſome things which have ſome ſhew of outward holineſs, yet have little regard to the holy name of God himſelf.*

THUS there are ſome perſons who will ſhew ſuch reverence and reſpect to a church, or houſe

* Pſal. xxx. 12.

upon the grace of Chriſt, which is ſufficient for you. If you depend only upon your own ſtrength theſe reſolutions will fail. It is only the power and grace of Chriſt that can fortify our reſolutions, and enable us to keep them.

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* Pſal. xxx. 12.

conſecrated to the public worſhip of God, that they would by no means enter the doors of ſuch an houſe with their hats on their heads; and yet ſtick not at profaning the name of God upon every trifling occaſion; as if the *Temple* was greater and more holy than the *God of the Temple.* And they have ſuch a reverence for the altar, or communion table, as never to paſs by it without *bowing* to it; and yet will make ſo free with the name of God, as to make uſe of it in the moſt careleſs and profane manner; as if the *altar* was more ſacred than the God of the altar. But it is no ſtrange thing for corrupt and fallen man to be ſo inconſiſtent, as to be ſuperſtitious in ſome things when they are very careleſs and profane in others.

6. FURTHERMORE, if by men's words they will be condemned; let it be conſidered, *what words will more certainly expoſe to condemnation, than thoſe of profane ſwearing and curſing.*

THE Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who is conſtituted judge of the world, and to whom all judgment is committed has told us, *That* every *idle word that men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give account thereof in the day of judgment: For by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned.** Now what words will more certainly expoſe to condemnation than thoſe that are blaſphemous and profane? Eſpecially conſidering that God has expreſly declared that he will not hold ſuch *guiltleſs* who take his name in vain.

7. *How will you think of theſe things in the time of ſickneſs and danger, and at the approach of death?*

SUCH times generally give a turn of thought; and things look after a different manner from what they

* Matt. xii. 36, 37.

they do in the time of health, and when all things are gay and pleaſant about us. And how do you think profane curſing and ſwearing will appear to you, when you ſee death approaching, and have realizing apprehenſions of the judgment to come, when you muſt give account of every profane oath or curſe that has proceeded out of your lips; oh! the cutting reflections and the diſtreſs and horror ſome ſuch profane perſons have been in, when death and judgment have appeared in their nearneſs and reality, and in all their awful terror! Well, ſuch a time will come, it haſtens upon you, and for ought you know it is very near even at the door.

8. CONSIDER further, *How you can expect that God ſhould hear you, when you call upon him in earneſt in the time of your diſtreſs, when you ſo frequently call upon him now, only in a profane manner.*

THEY who will in common converſation, or in their fooliſh talking and jeſting, be frequently crying out *O Lord!* or *O God!* without the leaſt reverence or ſerioufneſs; How can it be thought that God will hear them when in diſtreſs, though they cry to him in earneſt! Surely they may juſtly fear that he will turn a deaf ear to all their cries, that he "will laugh at their calamity and mock when their fear cometh, and when they call upon him he will not anſwer, and tho' they ſeek him early or earneſtly, yet ſhall not find him; becauſe they did not chooſe the fear of the Lord, and would none of his counſel."

9. FINALLY, and to cloſe the argument, *Conſider with what profound reverence the holy angels behave towards the holy Lord God: And from thence you may argue how abſurd and abominable it is for ſuch worms of the duſt as we are to trample upon that ſacred name.*

My hearers! let me tell you that the thouſands and the thouſand times ten thouſands of holy angels, who ſurround the throne of God, have ſuch a ſacred awe and reverence of his Majeſty, that they are repreſented as covering their faces in his preſence; and inſtead of treating his ſacred name in a light and vain manner *They cry one to another, ſaying,* HOLY, HOLY, HOLY *is the Lord of hoſts.*†——Now, conſider how abſurd and abominable it is, that when the angels, thoſe glorious ſpirits above, treat the great name of God with ſo much holy reverence, we worms of the duſt ſhould preſume to treat it with ſo much levity, careleſsneſs and contempt in common talk, in diverſions and plays, in paſſions and horrid imprecations. How would it make a man bluſh and be aſhamed, yea even confounded, to think that he is profaning that glorious name of God below, which all the holy angels are adoring and worſhipping above.

Now theſe, and ſuch like conſiderations, one would think abundantly ſufficient to perſuade every one to lay aſide all profaneneſs and behave with all holy reverence towards the infinitely holy God.

I will therefore juſt leave a few directions with you, and ſo conclude.

1ſt. *Labour to get right thoughts of God, of his infinite being and perfections, and to have your minds deeply impreſſed herewith.*

I am ſatisfied that many perſons profane the name of God becauſe they don't know, underſtand, or conſider what an infinitely great and glorious being he is. They don't ſee the infinite greatneſs of God; and that he is cloathed with honour and majeſty; that he only hath immortality; that ſuch is the ſplendor

† Iſaiah vi. 3.

ſplendor of his glory that *no man can approach, and whom no man hath ſeen, or can ſee.** And ſurely did men underſtand, did men conſider what greatneſs and glory and majeſty belongs to God, his excellency would make them ſo afraid, and ſuch a dread fall upon them, that they would tremble at the very thoughts of treating his holy name in a profane or irreligious manner.

2. *Watch and ſtrive againſt your paſſions*, from whence the ſin of profaneneſs does ſo frequently proceed.

LABOUR to get the rule of your own *ſpirit*, and that is one way to get the government of your *tongue*. For an unbridled tongue proceeds from ungoverned paſſions and appetites. *He that hath no rule over his own ſpirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls.*† That is, defenceleſs and liable to every aſſault, and to be overcome thereby.

3. *Labour after that gracious principle in the heart which is the grand preſervative againſt the ſin of profaneneſs.*

TRUE grace is ſo contrary to this ſin of profaneneſs, that wherever it prevails this ſin will die away. Grace gives us high and exalted thoughts of God, it inſpires the ſoul with a ſacred awe and holy reverence of the divine Majeſty, and begets an abhorrence of every thing whereby God's name is diſhonoured or profaned. Where there is true grace there will be a ſanctifying the Lord God in our hearts: And when God is ſanctified and reverenced in our hearts, we ſhall not profane him with our lips. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh. Let us then earneſtly ſeek for ſuch a gracious principle. Let us ſeek for it as for ſilver, and ſearch for it as for hid treaſures. And when once

* 1 Tim. vi. 16. † Prov. xxv. 28.

once ſuch a gracious principle begins to work in our ſouls there will ſuch a reverence of God be in our hearts as will not only reſtrain from the ſin of profane ſpeaking, but will make it appear ſuch an abominable ſin that our ſouls will hate.

4. *Carefully ſhun the company of the profane.*

For this is a vice that is very much learnt by example; and which people by free and familiar converſe with the profane, fall into even before they are aware of it. We may not walk in the counſel of the ungodly and profane, nor may we ſtand in the way of ſuch ſinners; much leſs may we ſet in the ſeat of the ſcornful, leſt we learn their ways. It is a ſtanding rule in the divine oracles, not to follow a multitude to do evil. And in order to this you muſt as much as may be avoid the company of ſuch. Never take a profane perſon for your intimate, *leſt thou learn his ways and get a ſnare to thy ſoul.**

5. *Labour after courage and reſolution to reſiſt temptations to ſuch a faſhionable ſin.*

It's being a modiſh ſin, a ſin common among the gay, and ſuch who are called the polite, but are indeed the looſe part of mankind, is exceeding apt to draw young people into it. But you muſt labour after courage and reſolution to reſiſt ſuch temptations. And let not the fear of being laughed at, or thought unpolite by your ſinful companions, tempt you ever to comply with them. And fix upon this as your principle, and reſolutely ſtand to it, that you ought to obey God rather than man; and that you ought to be more, infinitely more afraid of offending God than of the ridicule of the profane.

6. *Carefully watch againſt the lower degrees of profaneneſs;* and refrain even from that which approacheth unto it.

Keep

* Prov. xxii. 25.

KEEP at the greateſt diſtance from this accurſed ſin. Come not near the borders of it, leſt you fall into it. Beware of ſpeaking lightly or irreverently of any of the attributes of God, of his word, his worſhip, his day, or his holy ordinances: An indulged levity and vanity in theſe points will lead on to higher degrees of profaneneſs.

7. *See to it that you always ſpeak the truth,* and uſe yourſelves to plain ſimple affirmations or negations. Let *your yea be yea, and your nay nay*; let there be a ſimplicity and godly ſincerity in all your converſation; and then your *yeas* and your *nays* will abundantly anſwer, without any vehement aſſeverations, to gain credit to what you ſay.

8. FINALLY, *Cry mightily to God for his reſtraining grace.*

How unprofitable, how ſhameful, and how unreaſonable a ſin ſoever it is; yet it is a ſin that by ſome means, we hardly know what, has got ſuch a run in the world, that you need the grace of God to reſtrain and keep you from it. But he will be enquired of to do it for you; and therefore if you caſt off fear, and reſtrain prayer before God, no wonder if you fall into the groſſeſt impiety and profaneneſs. And will doubtleſs perſiſt in it until you betake your ſelves to prayer.—Well then, as ever you would get rid of this ſin of profaneneſs, or would be kept from falling into it, you muſt lift up your ſouls to God in humble fervent prayer, and ſay, *Keep back thy ſervant from ſuch a preſumptuous ſin as this, let it not have dominion over me; let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy ſight O Lord my ſtrength and my Redeemer.*

AMEN.

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